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Telegram From the Embassy in Argentina to the Department of State

Buenos Aires, July 27, 1977, 2151Z

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1. Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D770269-0610. Confidential; Priority; Limdis.
2. See footnote 2, Document XX [redacted] NR
3. See footnote 3, Document XX [redacted]
4. See footnote 2, Document XX [redacted]
5. A far right-wing, anti-Semitic monthly magazine. (Telegram 3370 from Buenos Aires, May 6, National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D770160-0389) (LOU)
6. Hector Hidalgo Sola disappeared July 18 in Buenos Aires. (Telegram 5341 from Buenos Aires, July 19, National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D770257-0001) (C)
7. In answer to a question about human rights during a public meeting in Yazoo City, Mississippi on July 21, Carter said, "We have seen recently in Argentina 342 political prisoners, who had been there for a long time, released." (*Public Papers: Carter, 1977, Book II,* p. 1324) NR
8. Todman traveled to Argentina in August. See Document XX [redacted]
9. Presumably a reference to H.R. 5262, which Reuss introduced in the House on March 21. The conference report was filed in the Senate on July 26, and Carter signed P.L. 95-118 into law on October 3.

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5522

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PDIP, AR
SUBJECT: US INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS

REF: (A) STATE 162292 (B) BUENOS AIRES 5303

1. REF A INSTRUCTED THAT AN APPROACH BE MADE TO THE GOA AT AN APPROPRIATELY SENIOR LEVEL TO NOTE THE USG INTEREST IN RECENT GOA STEPS TO IMPROVE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. THE INSTRUCTION ALSO PROVIDED THAT, IF THE STEPS ANNOUNCED BY THE GOA AND REPORTED IN B.A. 4638 WERE REAL RATHER THAN COSMETIC, THE ARGENTINES SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF THE PRESIDENT'S INTEREST IN THESE AND CONTINUING STEPS TOWARD THE RESTORATION OF THE RULE OF LAW.

2. REF B CONCLUDED THAT THERE APPEARED TO BE A DETECTABLE TREND TOWARD IMPROVEMENT IN RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, BUT DID NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS THE POINT OF WHETHER THE GOA MEASURES CITED WERE REAL OR COSMETIC. AFTER ATTEMPTS BY ALL ELEMENTS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM TO FOLLOW-UP ON THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE MEASURES ANNOUNCED BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GOA ON JUNE 15, WE HAVE NOW CONCLUDED THAT THEY DO HAVE SOME SUBSTANCE, BUT SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN ENTIRELY AT FACE VALUE. WE BELIEVE THAT SOME RESTRICTED FORM OF THE RIGHT OF OPTION TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WILL BE FORMALLY REESTABLISHED (PERHAPS AS THE OPPORTUNITY TO "PETITION" TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY AS NOW EXISTS IN PRACTICE IF NOT IN LAW.) THE SUPPRESSION OF CABILDO WAS NOT AS EXTENSIVE AS IT SEEMED, SINCE ONE OF THE TWO SUPPRESSED EDITIONS HAD ALREADY BEEN DISTRIBUTED. WE HAVE STILL BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM THE RELEASE OF ALL OF THE 342 PERSONS LISTED AS RELEASED BETWEEN MAY 27 AND JUNE 14. [redacted] IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT MANY OF THESE PERSONS WERE RELEASED. WE HAVE CONFIRMED FOUR CASES ACTUALLY RELEASED AND ASSUME, AS HAS OCCURRED WITH OTHER RELEASE LISTS, THAT MANY OF THOSE LISTED AS NO LONGER BEING DETAINED UNDER EXECTUIVE POWERS HAVE BEEN FORMALLY CHARGED WITH SOME CRIME. (THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT PROVIDE A LIST OF PERSONS DETAINED DURING THE PERIOD COVERED BY THE 342 RELEASES.)

3.3(b)(1)

3. IN THE APPROXIMATELY SIX WEEKS SINCE JUNE 14, THE GOA HAS ISSUED THREE LISTS OF DETAINEES AND RELEASEES UNDER THE EXECUTIVE POWER. THESE TOTAL 199 DETAINED AND

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77 RELEASED. SOME OF THOSE RELEASED ON THE JULY 23 LIST WERE SHOWN AS HAVING BEEN APPREHENDED ON THE JULY 2 LIST. INQUIRIES OF THE PERMANENT ASSOCIATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE ICRC AND THE NUNCIATURA ELICITED NIETHER REJECTION NOR CONFIRMATION OF THE LISTS. THEY OBSERVED THAT MANY OF THE PERSONS ON THE JUNE 14 LIST HAD BEEN IMPRISONED BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, AND THAT THERE WERE MANY NAMES ON THE LIST FROM OUTSIDE BUENOS AIRES. THE LISTS OF APPARENT RELEASES SINCE JUNE 15 DO NOT SHOW ANY
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PARTICULAR TREND. THE LACK OF A CLEAR POSITIVE TREND ON PRISONER RELEASES, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HIDALGO SOLA, AND THE HARASSMENT OF LABOR LEADERS COMBINE TO ARGUE AGAINST A CLOSE ASSOCIATION OF PRESIDENT CARTER WITH ANY SPECIFIC FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENT.

4. THE ECONOMY MINISTER, MARTINEZ DE HOZ, WAS THE OBVIOUS HIGH-LEVEL CHANNEL FOR EXPRESSION OF USG INTEREST. IN A MEETING WITH HIM ON JULY 22 THE CHARGE EXPRESSED OUR CONTINUING DEEP INTEREST IN STEPS TOWARD RESTORATION OF RULE OF LAW AND OUR INTEREST IN KNOWING ANY FURTHER DETAILS RELATING TO THE STEPS ANNOUNCED JUNE 15. THE MINISTER SAID HE WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO GO INTO DETAILS ABOUT NUMBERS OR NAMES. BUT THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE PROCEDURES ANNOUNCED ON JUNE 15 WERE GOING FORWARD. WHEN PRESSED FOR DETAILS, THE MINISTER SAID THE MATTER WAS OUTSIDE HIS AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY AND INDICATED THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO BECOME INVOLVED IN SPECIFICS. CHARGE NOTED THAT THE USG WAS PREPARED TO GIVE RECOGNITION TO FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AREA, AS WAS DONE BY OUR DIRECTOR AT THE WORLD BANK, AND WE HOPE THAT THE MINISTER MIGHT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH MORE SUCH INSTANCES. AS A FURTHER EVIDENCE OF OUR INTEREST AND WILLINGNESS TO RECOGNIZE FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENTS, CHARGE PROVIDED MINISTER WITH TELETYPE COPY OF PRESIDENT'S REMARKS AT YAZOO CITY WHICH MENTIONED RELEASES OR ARGENTINE PRISONERS. MARTINEZ DE HOZ APPEARED INTERESTED BUT LIMITED HIS COMMENTS TO OBSERVING THAT IN ARGENTINA THOSE DETAINED ARE NOT CALLED POLITICAL PRISONERS.

5. THOUGH MARTINEZ DE HOZ WAS UNWILLING TO DEAL IN SPECIFICS, HE DID EXPAND ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND DO MORE IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD WHICH WOULD FURTHER THAT END.
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HE SAID HE HOPED TO HAVE SOMETHING SUITABLE FOR ANNOUNCEMENT PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN. HE THOUGHT SOMETHING SPECIFIC ON THE RIGHT OF OPTION MIGHT BE READY SHORTLY, BUT WAS UNSURE. HE THEN CHANGED THE SUBJECT TO ASK FOR CLARIFICATION OF A PUZZLING CABLE HE HAD RECEIVED FROM THE ARGENTINE EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE REUSS AMENDMENT TO THE BILL PROVIDING FUNDING FOR IFI'S.

6. ON TWO OTHER OCCASIONS EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE RAISED WITH AN OFFICIAL OF THE PRESIDENCY THE DEEP US INTEREST IN FURTHER SPECIFIC STEPS TOWARD THE RULE OF LAW. THESE EXPLORATORY OBSERVATIONS WERE MET WITH LITTLE MORE THAN POLITE INTEREST.

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7. COMMENT: THE ARGENTINE RESPONSE IN THESE INSTANCES IS NOT PARTICULARLY ENCOURAGING. THE TACTIC OF EXPRESSING INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES DID NOT ELICIT POSITIVE RESPONSES, FOR THIS IS AN AREA WHERE FEW WISH TO TAKE THE BLAME OR SHARE CREDIT.
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